

Maurice Hinchey NEWS

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HINCHEY CALLS FOR IMPROVEMENTS IN TERRORISM-PREPAREDNESS PLAN

WASHINGTON - U.S. Representative Maurice Hinchey (NY-26) today announced that he has signed a letter to President Bush calling for improvements to the president's proposal for helping communities prepare for and respond to terrorism. The president's plan is similar to legislation introduced by Hinchey and others in October, but differs in ways that would shortchange local municipalities.

"Terrorism is a nationwide concern, but when an attack takes place it's the local governments and agencies that will have to respond," said Hinchey. "The federal government needs to provide municipalities with the tools they need to prepare for and respond to catastrophe."

After the September 11 attacks, Hinchey held meetings in the Hudson Valley and the Southern Tier to discuss the preparation and response needs of local municipalities. He is an original cosponsor of H.R. 3161, the Municipal Preparation and Strategic Response Act, which was introduced on October 23. Last month President Bush announced that he would include funding for initiatives like those called for in the legislation. But Hinchey and fifty of his colleagues found that the president's plan was inadequate in some respects.

In their letter to President Bush, Hinchey and his fellow representatives requested that three essential changes be made in the plan as the budget process moves forward. Specifically the letter calls for waiving the requirement for local entities to provide matching funds, a substantial increase in the funding allotted for the development of strategic plans, and a guarantee that a majority of planning funds will go directly to local communities. The letter was sent to the president on February 1.

"The planning is the most important thing," Hinchey added. "Communities need to have a comprehensive plan in place to prevent the kind of confusion that resulted from the ad hoc measures used after September 11. It's the responsibility of the federal government to help communities develop these plans."

Next week Hinchey plans to circulate a questionnaire among local municipalities and agencies to better assess preparedness needs in New York's 26th Congressional District.